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CHAPTER FIVE

Fairy-Tale Bodies: Prostheses and Narrative Perspective in Dinah Mulock Craik's *The Little Lane Prince*

The nineteenth-century folk and fairy tale revival prompted many English translations of stories from Germany, Scandinavia, and the Middle East, as well as retellings of old British tales, and new English translations of the already popular French *contes de fées* by Madame d'Aulnoy and Charles Perrault. Fairies and fairy tales occupied the Victorian imagination, with fairy images and motifs appearing in all forms of literature and culture, from soap advertisements to realist fiction.¹ By mid-century, authors like Charles Kingsley, Lewis Carroll, and George MacDonald were developing a modern British literary fairy-tale genre that combined contemporary narrative forms, such as the *Bildungsroman* novel, with the fairy-tale structure² and blended modern concerns, such as child labour, nationalism, Darwinism, and technology, with fairy godmothers and magical castles.³ Like sensation fiction, the modern fairy tale of the 1860s and 1870s was also interested in the relationship between the self or soul and the body and in responding to the scientific, technological, and medical changes that brought that relationship into question. For example, Carroll's Alice is unsure 'what [she's] going to be, from one

1 See Caroline Silver's *Strange and Secret Peoples: Fairies and the Victorian Consciousness* and Molly Clark Hillard's *Spellbound: The Fairy Tale and the Victorians* for more on the Victorian interest in fairies and fairy tales.

2 Of course, the *Bildungsroman* form was influenced by 'fairy-tales about growing up,' as Julia Prewitt Brown notes.

3 See Jennifer Schacker's *National Dreams: Remaking of Fairy Tales in Nineteenth-Century England* and Laurence Talairach-Vielmas's *Fairy Tales, Natural History and Victorian Culture* for more on the societal concerns probed in Victorian fairy tales.

moment to the next' since her body undergoes several transformations in a single day (91). With a democratic impulse, the opening of MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* insists that not one's birth but one's actions determine one's identity (47)—and yet the novel writes behavioural identity on the body via evolutionary theory, since 'as [the Goblins] grew mis-shapen in body, so had they grown in knowledge and cleverness ... [and] mischief' (48–49). Likewise, due to their bad behavioural choices, Kingsley's 'Doasyoulikes' physically degenerate into large-jawed and coarse-lipped people and then ultimately into language-less apes (173–75).

Several Victorian authors used the literary fairy tale genre to negotiate the changing understanding of the disabled body and identity as well. In Mary de Morgan's 1877 'Through the Fire,' for example, the crippled invalid protagonist, Jack, travels on the backs of fairies for adventures and, as a reward for using a magic wish to reunite fairy lovers rather than to cure himself, he receives from those lovers a magic silver belt that makes him 'quite strong' and 'no longer a cripple' (226). Instead of receiving cure, the intellectually disabled hero of Lucy Clifford's 1890 story 'Wooden Tony' turns into a wooden doll in a Swiss cuckoo clock as a result of his inherent connection to trees, his wish to be little and idle like the wooden toys his father carves, and the frightening magic of his father's toy dealer. But the fairy tale this chapter focuses on, Dinah Mulock Craik's *The Little Lane Prince and His Travelling Cloak: A Parable for Young and Old* (1874),⁴ offers neither cure nor punishment to its disabled hero, Prince Dolor. Instead, the hybrid form of this story, combining fairy tale, *Bildungsroman*, and parable, like the hybrid forms of *Notre-Dame de Paris* and *Bleak House*, defies conventional closure and so produces a complicated and at times incongruous understanding of corporeal difference.

The Little Lane Prince's early reception history demonstrates a range of readings that the story's form produced. When first published, some reviewers suggested that it was a simple moral allegory ('Children's Books' 2; Review in *Scotsman* 1479; 'Contemporary Literature' 265), while others implied that finding the moral required careful close reading ('Current Literature' 1571; 'Books Received' 653)—though none stated what that moral was. Another claimed that the story contains no explicit moral at all beyond Dolor's moral life ('Editor's

4 Craik first published the book in Leipzig, Germany, in 1874; I will be citing from the first English edition, illustrated by John Mc. Ralston, published in 1875.

Literary Record' 289). Still others felt the story was not a moral tale but rather 'a diminutive political allegory' (Yates 213) and 'humoursome satire' (Review in *The Nonconformist* 1479). This notable textual fluidity makes the novel's titular self-description as 'parable' all the more apt. Though parables are often perceived as closed allegories, with each signifier matching a pre-determined referent, their narrativity marks them as more 'dynamic than any extended metaphorical comparison' (Steen, 'Parable'). This dynamic allows for 'disclosive potential' since the parable will necessarily contain elements 'that need not correlate with the world as it is but can creatively present genuinely new possibilities of understanding' (Parris 43). The openness of meaning in *The Little Lane Prince* suggests that it shares the indeterminacy of the parable, as does the tension between its plot structure, which relies on fairy tale and *Bildungsroman* generic conventions, and its narrative techniques, such as focalization and illustration.

The few critical studies of *The Little Lane Prince* since the twentieth century, however, tend to interpret the tale either as an allegory of female power struggle (Showalter; S. Mitchell) or as a lesson for incorporating both feminine and masculine qualities in one's character (Philipose; Richardson). Such interpretations risk reducing the prince's complicated experience of physical disability to a metaphor for gender politics, a reduction that diminishes the complexity of disability's place in Victorian consciousness, as well as the place of disabled individuals in Victorian culture. For example, Showalter's argument that all of Craik's fictional invalids represent the helplessness of unmarried women presumes that invalidism was unquestionably viewed as powerless and therefore feminine (11–12); however, Maria Frawley's *Invalidism and Identity* shows that invalidism was a potentially powerful identity adopted by many Victorians, men as well as women. Moreover, reducing Dolor's disability to a metaphor also occludes Craik's sustained interest in the social and cultural implications of physical impairments.

Because her novels so frequently focused on disability and illness, both were seen as a distinct part of Craik's oeuvre. For example, noting her 'lively predilection for cripples and invalids by which she has always been distinguished,' Henry James calls her a 'chronicler' for 'the sickly half of humanity' (Review of *A Noble Life* 846). This 'predilection' for physical difference also manifests itself in her non-fiction writing, such as her essay series 'Strolls with Invalid Children,' or her article on the Association for Promoting the General Welfare of the Blind, 'Blind!' Even her collection of retold and translated fairy tales, *The Fairy Book* (1863), reveals Craik's attention to physical difference and the social interpretations of disability. In prefacing the stories,

she reminds readers ‘that in real life all beautiful people are not good, nor all ugly ones wicked’ (viii), and she carries this concept of judging others by their behaviour rather than their bodies into her translations and adaptations of the stories. For example, in ‘Graciosa and Percinet,’ the original author, Madame d’Aulnoy, had introduced the villain—an ugly, fat, one-eyed, ‘humpbacked and lame’ stepmother named Grognon—thus: ‘Ces sortes de monstres portent envie à toutes les belles personnes: elle haïssoit mortellement Gracieuse’ (d’Aulnoy 153).⁵ Instead of directly translating the French that equates Grognon’s physicality with her disagreeable personality, Craik writes, ‘Of course [Grognon] could not help her ugliness, and nobody would have disliked her for that, if she had not been of such an unpleasant temper that she hated everything sweet and beautiful, and especially Graciosa’ (145).

Moreover, Craik was close to many members of and advocates for the disabled community: she was married to George Lillie Craik, who lost a leg in a railway injury before their marriage (S. Mitchell 14); friends with Elizabeth Gilbert, the founder of the Association for Promoting the General Welfare of the Blind; long-time roommates with Gilbert’s biographer, Frances Martin; and godmother to the blind poet Philip Bourke Marston. Additionally, Craik’s political and religious ideals shaped her insistence on interpreting corporeality through individual behaviour instead of interpreting an individual’s identity through his or her corporeality. As her friend Frances Martin notes in her obituary, ‘She was democratic. She believed in the nobility of man as man, and looked upon condition, circumstance, or birth as an accident which ought not to determine his ultimate position’ (539). That Craik adopted her daughter, Dorothy, from a workhouse exemplifies her egalitarianism and counters the common Victorian convictions regarding ‘bad blood, and hereditary taints of character’ (S. Mitchell 17). Craik’s Christianity was likewise egalitarian. She never publicly claimed any particular denomination and, in her article ‘On Sisterhoods,’ emphasizes interdenominational similarities and encourages religious tolerance (132–34). Craik’s political and religious ethic, as well as her awareness of the social and physical conditions of disability, demands a more multifaceted reading of disability in *The Little Lame Prince*.

Using narratology and prosthetic theory to examine *The Little Lame Prince*’s representation of disability produces such a reading. While the story’s narrative trajectory appears to move towards closure by eradicating Prince Dolor’s disability through magical prosthetic gifts, the

5 ‘These kinds of monsters are envious of all beautiful people: she [Grognon] mortally detested Graciosa.’

story's narration and focalization frequently create textual instabilities that are ultimately tied to the body's role in narration and reading. This role is established in three integrated ways: through the narrator's ambiguous authority, through the letterpress's relationship to its early illustrations, and through shared focalization. By making readers aware first of the narrator's physical limitations and of their own roles as spectators, and then focalizing through the disabled hero while he is a spectator, *The Little Lane Prince* undermines its earlier use of Dolor as a sentimental spectacle meant to teach children to accept their lot in life. Readers' identification with Dolor through his focalization thus prompts empathy regarding the social circumstances of disability rather than sympathy for the physical circumstances and so places readers and the disabled character in a relationship of equality. Moreover, moments in which readers focalize with Dolor through his prosthetic gifts reveal the limitations of all bodies and cause readers to speculate on the beauty and infinite variety of physical difference.

Prostheticizing Maturity

Although the term *prosthesis* most commonly refers to artificial replacements of absent or malfunctioning body parts, it may also include media, such as the Internet or television, as a 'technological prosthesis' that, rather than correcting or replacing, 'enhanc[es] and exten[ds] ... human faculties' (Cleland 75). Mitchell and Snyder expand the term theoretically to refer to how disability functions in literature as an embodiment of cultural deviance (54) that becomes 'prostheticized'—that is, restored to normalcy—through the narrative's resolution (6–7). Sarah S. Jain further argues that prostheses 'produce the disability' that they are meant to remedy because they 'assume a disabled body in need of supplementation' (33). Because the 'primary objective' of prostheses is 'to return the incomplete body to the invisible status of normative essence' (Mitchell and Snyder 8), prostheses essentially 'serve as indices of disability' (Siebers, 'Disability as Masquerade' 10). In *The Little Lane Prince*, the term *prosthesis* applies not only to the assistive devices such as the crutches used by the hero as an adult, but also to technological extensions or enhancements and to normalizing tools that both imply and erase physical difference.

The plot structures of *Bildungsromane* and fairy tales both progress towards stabilization of social order, and in *The Little Lane Prince*, the magical gifts that Dolor receives from his fairy godmother function within these plots to support his prosthetic normalization. According

to structuralist scholars of folklore, the basic arc of the fairy-tale plot begins with a lack recognized and ends with that lack fulfilled (Lüthi 4–5)—that is to say, the story begins with disorder and moves towards order. For example, *Sleeping Beauty* begins with a princess being stolen from her parents and ends with her restoration as royalty. Mitchell and Snyder's theory of *narrative prosthesis*, described in Chapter Three above, posits a similar structure for narratives with disability, in which disability is the disorder that must be 'rehabilitat[ed] or fix[ed]' in the action of the story through cure, death, or removal (53).⁶ In fact, Mitchell and Snyder illustrate this structure with a fairy tale, Hans Christian Andersen's *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*, which follows a one-legged tin soldier on various adventures until he melts in a fire while gazing at a ballerina doll whom he loves unrequitedly.

As a fairy tale and as a narrative of disability, *The Little Lame Prince* follows these basic structures. A lack is acknowledged and a physical difference exposed by the second chapter: the baby prince is dropped by his nurse, his legs stop growing, and he becomes unable to stand. His people perceive this disability as a threat to the political stability of 'Nomansland,' his kingdom: they exclaim, 'A prince, and not able to stand on his own legs! What a dreadful thing! what a misfortune for the country!' (17). Further disorder develops when Dolor's father, the king, dies while the prince is still an infant. Dolor's uncle then usurps the throne, exiling the prince to a faraway tower with only a nurse as companion. Order is restored and lack fulfilled through the resolution of the story: Dolor is re-crowned king after his uncle's death, and he uses 'a wonderful pair of crutches' (158) designed to help him walk, stand, and thus be 'quite independent' (159). However, according to the principle in narrative prosthesis that, if 'disability falls too far from an acceptable norm,' narrative 'seeks to accomplish an erasure of difference all together' (Mitchell and Snyder 6–7), order is not fully restored until Dolor leaves his kingdom, abdicating the throne in favour of his non-disabled cousin.⁷ Once the narrative eradicates disability, order is fully restored and the story ends.

6 Ann Schmiesing likewise notes the similarity between the fairy-tale plot and Mitchell and Snyder's narrative prosthesis in her book on disability in Grimm's collections of stories. For further discussion of disability's role in the form of the fairy tale, see Hans-Jörg Uther's entry 'Disability' in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales*.

7 This resolution of the story in which a healthy-bodied prince takes over as king exhibits latent anxiety about the possibility of Dolor producing an heir as well as Victorian anxieties about the social body of Britain, in which national 'health' was measured by the bodily health of the individual citizens within

As the fairy-tale plot establishes social stability through moving from disorder or lack to order and fulfilment, so the *Bildungsroman* plot establishes social stability by taking a single character through a normalizing educative process. It is this focus on 'childhood as a period of psychological and moral growth' that Alan Richardson claims 'most differentiates Victorian literary fairytales and fantasies from traditional fairytales' (3). In *The Little Lane Prince*, the main portion of the narrative focuses on the hero's boyhood as a period of growth into young adulthood. While Richardson argues that Craik uses the *Bildungsroman* structure to show Dolor's development from a powerless femininity to an empowered but 'soften[ed]' masculinity (15), I posit that the *Bildung* progress in Craik's text moves from perceived physical abnormality to an acceptable normalcy and that this transformation takes place through the magical prostheses given to the prince by his fairy godmother, called Stuff-and-Nonsense.

In their feminist readings of *The Little Lane Prince*, Showalter, Sally Mitchell, and Lily Philipose presuppose that the godmother and her gifts represent artistic creativity and imagination. S. Mitchell argues, 'At one level, obviously, the story is an allegory about the imagination (and, perhaps, about the writing of fiction)' (88). Philipose likewise claims that 'The cloak is nothing less than the faculty of imagination, with which the prince can overcome his physical limitations' (135). This allegorical reading of Stuff-and-Nonsense and her gifts may be possible, especially since, in 'Strolls with Invalid Children,' Craik encourages the use of imagination in reading as a way for sick children to escape the limitations of their bodies (385).⁸ However, the text itself resists such direct allegorical reading. Stuff-and-Nonsense interacts with several people during Dolor's christening and therefore is not a figment of his imagination or a dream vision. Moreover, Dolor's lack of control over his gifts—his forgetting the magic words required to work the cloak and its refusal to take him to play with other boys—suggests that they exist outside him rather than as part of his imagination. In fact, the narrator's comparison of books to the 'elegant but empty dishes' from 'Barmecide's Feast,' a story in which

it. See Pamela Gilbert's *Mapping the Victorian Social Body* and *The Citizen's Body: Desire, Health, and the Social in Victorian England*.

- 8 Craik writes, 'our thoughts should take us out of ourselves—away from the weary body, which perhaps cannot stir from bed or sofa ... The more we can shut our mind's eye on the things around us, and open it upon those which, being invisible, we can look at whenever we please, the better it will be for us all' (385).

pretend food leaves a beggar hungry, suggests that imagination may fall short of fulfilling one's needs (86–87). Even if Stuff-and-Nonsense and her cloak were direct allegorical representations of the power of imagination, they nonetheless enact a prostheticization that simultaneously indicates and compensates for Dolor's physical deviance.

Stuff-and-Nonsense's first gift to Dolor, a magical flying cloak, functions as a physical prosthesis by providing him with some independent mobility. However, it also serves the prosthetic purpose of making Dolor aware of his physical difference and of marking that difference. As Stuff-and-Nonsense gives the prince the cloak, she explains that she does so 'because [he is] different from other people' (59). Touching his legs, she tells him, 'These are not like those of other little boys' and 'your life will be quite different to most people's lives' (60). This surprises Dolor who, living alone, has compared his body and its abilities only to those of his nurse and the characters in his books. Nonetheless, from then on Dolor sees himself as 'not like other little boys,' as unable 'to do as they did, and play as they played' (61). Immediately following the gift giving, the narrator places this recognition of difference as a step in the maturing process:

The sense of *the inevitable*, as grown-up people call it—that we cannot have things as we want them to be, but as they are, and that we must learn to bear them and make the best of them—this lesson, which everybody has to learn soon or late—came, alas! sadly soon, to the poor boy. (61)

Thus, Dolor's body and this prosthesis provide the source of his 'psychological and moral growth' (Richardson 3).

The next two magical gifts from Stuff-and-Nonsense, a pair of golden spectacles and a pair of silver ears, function as technological prostheses—that is, rather than fix a presumed defect, they attach to and extend his body, allowing him to see and hear from great distances: the pair of glasses 'fixed itself on to the bridge of his nose' (80) and the ears 'fitted so exactly over his own, that he hardly felt them, except for the difference they made in his hearing' (96). The three gifts seem like ideal playthings, allowing Dolor to venture out of his tower, each time further than the last, and to see and hear things outside of his enclosed life. But even as they prosthetically enhance his body, like the cloak, they ultimately serve to reinforce his social segregation and difference. When he uses them to watch and hear a shepherd boy play and run, the difference between the boy's legs and his own 'strike[s] him painfully' (97)—particularly because the cloak, which has previously obeyed

all of Dolor's wishes, refuses to let him play with the boy (99). After watching the shepherd run, Dolor 'understood what his godmother had meant' when she told him his legs were different, and he wonders 'why [he] was born at all, since [he] was not to grow up like other little boys' (102). Immediately following this expression of self-worthlessness, the narrator clarifies that suffering brought on by difference provides the lesson through which Dolor acquires maturity. Addressing readers directly, the narrator says, 'There is much that we do not know, and cannot understand ... We have to accept it all ... even though you don't as yet see the reason of it' (103). The narrator adds that Dolor's meditation on his suffering 'seemed to make him grow years older in a few minutes' (103). Thus, the magical prostheses cement Dolor's physical difference, and the exclusion it brings with it, for the purpose of advancing his progression towards adulthood and imagined normalcy.

Once Dolor has internalized and accepted this notion of his physical difference, his process of maturation occurs through work, which Craik's middle-class readers would have perceived as the normal (and valuable) experience of an adult. When the prince discovers that he is the rightful king of Nomansland, he 'fe[els] like a man' (115) and reflects that 'big boys do not always play[, n]or men neither—they work' (117). From then on, he uses the magic cloak, ears, and spectacles for work: observing the death of the putative king and then watching the resultant political unrest in his kingdom. Dolor returns to the tower frightened by the revolution to find that his nurse has left and that he is trapped there alone. Dolor feels that his fairy godmother 'had evidently left him to help himself' to reach manhood by learning independence (140). The narrator tells us that Dolor's solitude 'threw him back upon himself, and into himself—in a way that all of us have to learn when we grow up' (142).⁹ In learning to do for himself, Dolor also learns to wish to be able to do for others, saying, 'Suppose I had grown a man, and had had work to do, and people to care for, and was so useful and busy that they liked me, and perhaps even forgot I was lame' (144). Thus, Dolor expresses the typical middle-class Victorian concept that work provides the ultimate normalization for the adult male.

After his nurse returns with soldiers and lords of Nomansland to retrieve him and re-crown him king, he indeed becomes 'so useful and busy that [his people] liked him' (144). His ability to be useful and busy is supplied by his material prostheses: crutches and a throne

9 Of course, the ultimate irony of this lesson is that, left in the tower, Dolor cannot escape or retrieve food and water to survive, and thus is ultimately helpless until his providential rescue.

‘ingeniously contrived to hide his infirmity’ (160). However, while these good works do indeed make him a well-loved king, his people never completely forget his disability: instead, Dolor’s loving subjects know him by ‘the sound of his crutch on the marble palace-floors’ (159) and ‘were almost ready to die for their *poor lame* King’ (160; emphasis added). Although the people hear the sound of his crutch with affection, that sound functions as an identifier of Dolor. Therefore, because his disability remains his defining quality, despite his success as king, the narrative continues until Dolor installs as king his young, athletic cousin, who is ‘tall and straight as a poplar tree’ (164), and until Dolor uses the magic prosthesis of the cloak to exile himself permanently from Nomansland. This resolution, in which the able-bodied figure steps into the ruling position while the disabled figure steps aside, would be unnecessary if, as Richardson posits, the story offered male readers ‘a version of growing up’ that counters the notion that ‘male power and privilege ... come[s] only at the expense of repressing the feminine’ (9–10). Were that the case, the story could have ended with Dolor as king. The actual ending privileges physical normalcy and implies that the disabled body is the text’s central concern.

While Richardson is correct in saying that Dolor’s gender identity is ambivalent, this ambivalence reflects Victorian gender politics less than it does Victorian anxieties about disability and sexuality. Although Jack Zipes notes that Victorian fairy tales often ‘placed great emphasis on the fusion of female and male qualities’ (128), the ‘neutral,’ ‘hypermasculine,’ and ‘feminin[e]’ characteristics of Dolor that Richardson notices (9) act to feminize the disabled male body and desexualize the disabled body (concepts that people with disabilities still encounter).¹⁰ Stoddard Holmes explains that Victorian discomfort surrounding sexuality and disability directly correlated with anxieties about heredity (*Fictions of Affliction* 62–73). Although Dolor’s is an acquired rather than congenital disability, *The Little Lame Prince* nonetheless exhibits such anxieties. Dolor’s physical weakness is frequently associated with his invalid mother; in fact, his uncle suggests to Dolor’s father that the child’s inability to walk is a ‘slight delicacy—ahem!—in the spine; something inherited, perhaps, from his dear mother’ (20). However, anxiety about heredity is pacified, along with nationalistic and eugenic anxiety regarding the idea of a disabled leader, when Dolor refuses to marry and states that ‘his country was

10 For a discussion of the present cultural anxieties regarding disability and sexuality see Margrit Shildrick’s ‘Contested Pleasures: The Sociopolitical Economy of Disability and Sexuality.’

his bride, and he desired no other' (160). Because he 'never [gives] them a Queen' (160), neither will he give them a disabled heir to the throne; instead, he has his athletic cousin replaces him 'as a fitter king' (166), displacing apprehension and restoring stability.

Embodied Narrator and Readers

Notwithstanding *The Little Lane Prince's* normalizing narrative structure and its 'impulse towards closure'—which John Stephens would argue manifests a 'socializing, didactic ... desire for fixed meanings' common in children's literature (41)—a detailed reading of the narration and focalization in the novel reveals many instabilities that keep the story open regardless of its enclosed structure. *The Little Lane Prince's* subtitle, *A Parable for Young and Old*, may seem to indicate a closed, didactic purpose, as do the opening lines of chapter five:

If any reader, big or little, should wonder whether there is a meaning in this story, deeper than that of an ordinary fairy tale, I will own that there is. But I have hidden it so carefully that the smaller people, and many larger folk, will never find it out, and meantime the book may be read straight on ... for what interest it has, or what amusement it may bring. (69)

The narrator here seems to imply that the story contains a deliberately placed, controlled moral (and the plot structure suggests a moral demanding normalization); however, this passage also suggests that the story's meaning is complex, not only for children but for the adult audience as well, and thus denies simple didacticism. Here readers see that within the story there exists an unresolved tension between the plot structure, which supports normalcy, and the narrative voice, which promotes plurality of interpretation and hence difference, which I will show extends to bodily difference. The narration and focalization of *The Little Lane Prince* frequently create textual instabilities that keep the story open in spite of its enclosed structure; notably, these instabilities are ultimately tied to the body's role in narration and reading. This role is established in three integrated ways: through the narrator's ambiguous authority, through the letterpress's relationship to its early illustrations, and through shared focalization.

Through much of *The Little Lane Prince*, Craik uses *overt* narration, that is, narration that gives 'evaluative descriptions' and 'showcase[s] [its] own opinions' (Herman and Vervaeke 87–88). Generally, scholars

of children's literature argue that the more overt the narrator's commentary, the more control the narrator has over textual interpretation (Hunt 172–74; Stephens 27; Nikolajeva 174). Granted, Craik's narrator does occasionally use an authoritative tone—or what Robin Melrose and Diana Gardner call the “‘I know better’ approach” (145)—in quasi-didactic asides to the audience, such as one in which she tells them that they must ‘accept anything [their] parents may tell [them], even though [they] don’t as yet see the reason of it’ (Craik, *The Little Lamé Prince* 103). However, the narrator's repeated denial of omniscience—one that I might even call an ‘I-know-less’ approach—demonstrates the limits of its textually created body. Whereas an ‘I-know-better’ narrator, like the one in George MacDonald's *Princess and the Goblin* (Melrose and Gardner 148), asks readers questions to which he immediately provides the answers, *The Little Lamé Prince*'s narrator prevents complete narrative closure by asking questions and then admitting ignorance of the answers, even in the closing words of the story. Although Craik includes the typical ‘happily-ever-after’ fairy-tale ending in the story's final line, ‘But one thing I am quite sure of, that, wherever he is, he is perfectly happy. And so, when I think of him, am I’ (169),¹¹ she precludes closure by first asking this: ‘Whither [Dolor] went, or who went with him, it is impossible to say ... What he did there, or where he is now, who can tell? I cannot’ (169). This question reopens Dolor's story even while closing it, indicating a continuing and irresolvable presence of disability and presumed difference.¹²

Even while holding some qualities of an omniscient narrator, such as relating unspoken thoughts and feelings and transcending ‘the boundaries imposed by physical being’ (Jaffe, *Vanishing Point* 6), the narrator of *The Little Lamé Prince* admits limitations in her knowledge, framing her interjections with ‘I cannot decide’ or ‘I am not sure.’ Quite frequently, in mentioning these limitations, the narrator evokes her own physical being (generally through sightedness), reconstructing the very boundaries that her quasi-omniscience transcends. While I typically refer

11 For a discussion of the ‘happily-ever-after’ formula of folk and fairy tales as a signal of closure and return to reality, see Lüthi, 49–53. He notes that ‘the formula has two faces: It has clarity of outer form, but taken as a whole it is in many ways not, or not fully, transparent’ (53).

12 Similarly, Clifford's ‘Wooden Tony’ ends with both the removal and irresolvable presence of disability when the intellectually disabled Tony is removed from his home but eternally frozen as a wooden doll. As Karen O'Connor-Floman notes, ‘The bleak ending of “Wooden Tony” might reflect a *fin-de-siècle* hopelessness, or it might more accurately suggest that there is something about the changing story itself that is intractable, that resists naturalization’ (88).

to narrators using *it*, I use *her* here because the narrator genders her textually created body by mentioning that she is called ‘mamma’ by her child (155). The most salient example of the narrator reconstructing boundaries via her bodily presence comes shortly before she describes Dolor’s first trip on his magical cloak. The narrator says, ‘Now, I don’t expect anybody to believe what I am going to relate ... And as seeing’s believing, and I never saw it, I cannot be expected implicitly to believe it myself, except in a sort of way; and yet there is truth in it—for some people’ (71–73). Roderick McGillis notes the strange conflict in this interjection, but he interprets it as an expression of the ‘deeply felt suspicion of fantasy adventure’ typical of Victorian children’s authors; he suggests that, through this aside, Craik ‘wanted to be sure that the child reader did not take this as too seriously real’ (19). I would argue that, while the overt narration throughout the story does remind readers of the act of storytelling with phrases such as, ‘I must leave that for another chapter’ (68) or ‘Stay, and I’ll tell you all about it’ (52), Craik does not include this tension to ensure the reader’s scepticism, but rather to conjure for her narrator a physical self that acknowledges the limitations of both narrative omniscience and ability.

Moreover, in concert with the accompanying illustration from the first English edition of *The Little Lane Prince*,¹³ the narrator’s interjection elicits in readers an awareness of the limits of their own physicality. In this edition, the words ‘And as seeing’s believing, and I never saw it’ appear directly below John Mc. Ralston’s illustration of Dolor flying on the cloak (Figure 1). Perry Nodelman argues that, in picture books, ‘the privileging of the point of view from which [the pictures] report on the events they describe’ supplies readers ‘with ways of understanding their own subjectivity—their selfhood or individuality’ (118–19). Through the presence of illustration combined with the narrator’s interjection, readers both share the narrator’s point of view and are given a separate perspective through illustration that indicates their own subjectivity as limited by corporeality. Here, readers are given a visual representation that allows them to see what the narrator cannot, and proleptically so, before the narrator has even described the event. Of course, this argument works only if we presume that the audience is sighted, which the narrator certainly presumes (as well as hearing and non-disabled).

13 In 1874, Craik published what was likely a copyright edition through Tauchnitz Publishing in Leipzig to inhibit pirating in Britain and America. I thank Richard Nemesvari for informing me about the practice of publishing foreign copyright editions in the Victorian era.

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THE LITTLE LAME PRINCE.

am going to relate, though a good many wise people have believed a good many sillier things.



And as seeing's believing, and I never saw it, I cannot be expected implicitly to believe it myself,

Figure 1: John Mc. Ralston, *The Little Lame Prince*,
Daldy, Isbister & Co., 1875, p. 72.

Courtesy of Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books,
Toronto Public Library.

However, despite readers' physical advantage of seeing what the narrator cannot, they are still limited by their bodies as the narrator is by hers, particularly since the illustration binds the readers to a ground-level sightedness that looks up to the floating prince. In this case, it is Dolor who has the more 'omniscient' point of view, one that both narrator and readers are denied. Likewise, the illustrations of the shepherd boy (100), the dying king (127), and Nomansland's revolution (131) are all ground-level, straight-ahead views, although, for Dolor, they are seen from above. Moreover, directly below the illustration of Nomansland's revolt (Figure 2), the text reads, 'you will hear and read in books about what are called revolutions—earnestly I trust that neither I nor you may ever see one' (131). Here, again, the tension between the letterpress and the illustration, which allows readers to view what the narrator trusts they will never see, reminds readers of the limitedness of their bodies and of textual representations that rely on sight and hearing.

However, consciousness of readers' restricted physicality does not rely on Ralston's illustrations alone: the narrator's voice also reminds readers of their physical limits and of her own when, without illustrative accompaniment, she explains Dolor's first view of Nomansland's capital city. First, the narrator places readers in the perspective of Dolor in the cloak high above the city, describing him looking down to it. Then, the narrator pulls the reader down to the perspective of walking through the streets of the city, saying,

Most of us have some time or other visited a great metropolis ... wandered through its network of streets ... looked up at its tall rows of houses, its grand public buildings ... peeped into its miserable little back alleys ... An awful sight is a large city, seen any how from any where. (118–19)

The narrator then pulls the reader back up to the perception from the traveling cloak, asking the reader, 'suppose you were to see [a city] from the upper air; where, with your eyes and ears open, you could take in everything at once? What would it look like? How would you feel about it?' and adding, 'I hardly know myself. Do you?' (119). In asking these questions, the narrator places herself and her readers in Dolor's physical point of view and indicates that Dolor 'was very much bewildered—as bewildered as a blind person who is suddenly made to see' (119). In saying this, the narrator doubly reinforces the limitedness of all corporeality by implying the potential for her own and her readers' disoriented senses and by indicating that, for the

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down with the King!" "Down with the crown,
and the King too!" "Hurrah for the Republic!"
"Hurrah for no Government at all."

Such were the shouts which travelled up to the
travelling-cloak. And then began—oh, what a
scene!



When you children are grown men and women—
or before—you will hear and read in books
about what are called revolutions—earnestly I
trust that neither I nor you may ever see one.
But they have happened, and may happen again,
in other countries beside Nomansland, when
wicked kings have helped to make their people

Figure 2: John Mc. Ralston, *The Little Lame Prince*,
Daldy, Isbister & Co., 1875, p. 131.

Courtesy of Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books,
Toronto Public Library.

blind person, sudden sightedness would be equally as incapacitating. Moreover, she never describes the city, and instead says, 'I have not seen it, and therefore cannot describe it, so we will just take it upon trust, and suppose it to be, like every other fine city, the finest city that was ever built' (121). Here the narrator indicates the limits of her physical body and includes with it readers' shared lack of perception: she has the ability to see, but has not seen *this* particular city, and they must all therefore adapt according to that limitation. Rather than hierarchically dividing bodies into 'different' and 'normal' categories as its outer structure seems to do, *The Little Lane Prince's* narrative strategies thus engage with an equalizing concept of bodies by emphasizing the limitations of all corporeality through focalization.¹⁴

Focalization and Prosthesis

As the perspective given in picture books through illustration furnishes readers with subjectivities through which to engage in the narrative, focalization causes readers to 'match their own sense of selfhood with ideas of self constructed in and by the text' (Stephens 68). That is, focusing narrative through the consciousness of a character causes readers to 'internaliz[e] the perceptions and attitudes of the focalizer' (68). In the example of Dolor's first flight discussed above, the narrator focalizes through her own perception and constructs a self that is limited by corporeality. The reader matches this sense of physically limited selfhood through the illustration accompanying the narrator's comment. But the novel often focalizes through Dolor, particularly during his boyhood period of *Bildung* growth. In part, this focalization serves the didactic purpose of encouraging readers to internalize Dolor's lessons, such as the one that 'we cannot have things as we want them to be, but ... must learn to bear them and make the best of them' (Craik 61). In that particular example, the narrator's interjection explains to readers how to interpret Dolor's realization of his difference, which is focalized through Dolor's perception. But there are, at times, striking contradictions between what the narrator's voice and the novel's focalization imply about Dolor's physical difference.

14 My reading here draws on Deborah Beth Creamer's 'limits model' of embodiment, which, unlike the 'medical and minority models' of disability, 'offers us the ability to think of the presence of limits as a natural and good aspect of being human that at the same time is inherently difficult and challenging' (32).

Frequently, while describing Dolor's physical body and its movement, the narrator breaks the description to pity him in an aside, for example, '—alas! he never could be [tall], with his poor little shrunken legs' (110) or 'He sprang out of bed,—not to his feet, alas! but to his poor little weak knees' (137). But when Dolor considers his body, he does not focus on his physical difference as the narrator does here or as in the sections focalized through his fairy godmother, Stuff-And-Nonsense. In fact, before he is taught to devalue his body, Dolor feels that there is nothing about him to pity; he even rejects the pity that Stuff-and-Nonsense first offers him, though he welcomes her gifts and affection (46, 48). At that time, his assertions that he does not require or deserve pity are focalized either externally (that is, outside of the narrated characters, yet not overtly through the narrator) or through Stuff-And-Nonsense, and as such could perhaps be interpretable as ironic or mistaken since, when the focalizer's and narrator's perceptions oppose each other, readers align with the narrator 'when it is obvious to readers that a focalizing character is misinterpreting an event or situation' (Stephens 68). However, while Craik does use that kind of irony when focalizing through Dolor's uncle or the courtiers, the sections focalized through Dolor contain no indications that his views are mistaken.

When Dolor *does* consider himself worthy of pity, and we are told so in narrative focalized through him, his self-pity has less to do with his physical body and the type of mobility it grants him—mobility that the narrator also describes as 'active,' quick, and 'not graceful but convenient' (65). Instead, Dolor's sense that he is pitiable surrounds the *social* consequences of having a body defined as different. When Dolor watches the shepherd boy running and playing with a dog, readers share through internal focalization Dolor's 'admiration' of their activity and his anticipation of the possibility of social interaction with them. Disappointment arises only when he is barred from that interaction (99–102); this exclusion from social contact, which comes from his godmother via the cloak, causes Dolor to view his legs as 'feeble, useless' and 'no good' to him (102). Readers' identification with Dolor through his focalization thus prompts engaged empathy regarding the *social* circumstances of disability rather than distancing sympathy for the physical ones. The shared emotions of empathy then place readers and the disabled character in a relationship of equality.

As seen above, focalization through the narrator and Stuff-And-Nonsense, in contrast, often causes a relationship of inequality between reader and disabled hero based on a pity that devalues the

disabled body. Even when the narrator *seems* to discourage readers from pitying physical difference, the power relationship remains unequal. For example, the fourth chapter ends in a description of Dolor's body that is interrupted by the narrator with a statement of pity: 'Prince Dolor darted towards [the cloak], tumbling several times on the way,—as he often did tumble, poor boy! and pick himself up again, never complaining' (67). In the next chapter, the narrator opens with the explanation that the story bears a deeper meaning than is visible on the surface, and then says:

I return to Prince Dolor, that little lame boy *whom many may think so exceedingly to be pitied*. But if you had seen him as he sat patiently untying his wonderful cloak, ... using skilfully his deft little hands ... while his eyes glistened with pleasure, and energy, and eager anticipation—if you had beheld him thus, you might have changed your opinion. (69–70; emphasis added)

Here, to describe Dolor's actions, the narrator uses external focalization to emphasize his body, his hands and eyes, as admirable and *not* pitiable. While doing so, the narrator also emphasizes readers' bodies, saying 'if you had seen him' and 'if you had beheld him thus' (70).

But, in a narrator-focalized statement that calls directly on readers to share her perspective, the narrator adds, 'When we see people suffering or unfortunate, we feel very sorry for them; but when we see them bravely bearing their sufferings, and making the best of their misfortunes, it is quite a different feeling. We respect, we admire them' (70). The narrator's argument here reinforces dominance over those who are 'suffering or unfortunate' (i.e. the disabled), suggesting that respect for people with physical difference is predicated first on pity for presumed physical suffering and then on their ability to 'overcome' that suffering.¹⁵ As such, the narrator contradicts its own didactic advice not to pity Dolor when she so shortly thereafter resumes referring to him as 'poor.' Thus, it seems that while

15 Ann Dowker warns critics to remember that, in Victorian novels, 'the School of Pain is not confined to disability, the treatment of which must be seen in the broader context of the ways in which misfortunes were often treated as bestowed by God for the ultimate good of the individual.' She notes that 'This emphasis on submission to the will of God applies to all characters, and applies to a whole range of circumstances: not only disability' (n. pag.). However, the narrator's aside here encourages readers to learn the lesson of enduring hardship *specifically* through Dolor's disabled body.

focalizing *through* Dolor creates an equal power relationship through readers' empathy, focalizing *on* Dolor creates an asymmetrical power dynamic based on pity.

However, as I have argued above, the text represents Dolor as suffering not in his physical experience of disability but only in his social experience of it. Moreover, as Jane Stemp notes, neither Stuff-and-Nonsense nor her magical gifts 'are intended to "cure" the prince's lameness' (n. pag.). Instead, by soothing and amusing him, they fulfil the Prince's true needs, which are social: 'they give him ... freedom and love, both of which have previously been lacking' (Stemp n. pag.). I have noted above how the godmother and her gifts *create* and *reinforce* that social difference in their functions as prostheses. But while the prosthetic function of the travelling cloak, golden spectacles, and silver ears first labels and then erases difference, their actual physical work reveals how truly common difference is. This shared difference is most clear when the narrator focalizes *alongside* Dolor—that is, when she uses her overt narrative voice to describe his physical perspective, which is enhanced by his magical prostheses, and when she encourages readers to imagine that unfamiliar, prostheticized perspective as well.

This multilayered perspective inevitably disrupts normalcy and exposes the ubiquity and beauty of difference. When Dolor first uses the magic ears and spectacles together, the narrator points out how mundane the sights and sounds of the countryside seem to her and to the story's audience; she says that they are 'something [that] we listen to daily and never notice' (96) or that 'we see in myriads' (94). But, the focalizing alongside Dolor as he uses his prostheses amplifies these sounds and sights, making them unfamiliar. The 'newly amplified' sounds of Victorian technology (e.g. the stethoscope, the microphone, and industrial and railway sound pollution) led Victorian writers to convey 'the sense of careful listening to a world at large,' or, as John M. Picker calls it, 'auscultation' (13, 4, 6). When the narrator focalizes alongside Dolor as his silver ears draw out sounds, the auscultation linguistically parallels the amplified 'sounds of the visible world': 'Winds blowing, waters flowing, trees stirring, insects whirring (dear me! I am quite unconsciously writing rhyme), with the various cries of birds and beasts,—lowing cattle, bleating sheep, grunting pigs, and cackling hens,—all the infinite discords that somehow or other make a beautiful harmony' (96–97).

That these words would likely have been read aloud—due to Victorian middle-class family reading habits and to the illiteracy of many of the intended listeners, young children—further draws

attention to the audience's bodies by using onomatopoeia ('lowing,' 'bleating,' 'grunting,' and 'cackling') and by pointing out how readers would hear her words as rhyme. With this attention to sound, Craik's narrator exposes the ubiquity and beauty of difference, arguing that Dolor's prosthetic amplification uncovers 'all the infinite discords that somehow or other make a beautiful harmony' (96–97). Likewise, focalizing alongside Dolor as he examines leaves through his spectacles, the narrator exclaims:

[H]ow wonderful [the leaves] are—every one of them a little different. I don't suppose you could ever find two leaves exactly alike, in form, colour, and size—no more than you could find two faces alike, or two characters exactly the same. The plan of this world is infinite similarity and yet infinite variety. (94)

In these moments of focalization through the magical prostheses, Craik causes readers to speculate on the beauty and infinite variety of difference—doubtlessly in bodies as well as in nature.

As a literary fairy tale, *The Little Lane Prince* employs a fantasy setting and magical circumstances to depict the moral, psychological, and physical development of its hero, Prince Dolor. In using magical prostheses to catalyse that development, and in positioning the story as an open parable as well as a fairy tale and *Bildungsroman*, Craik conveys conflicting interpretations of Prince Dolor's body. The outer structure of the novel, with its blend of *Bildungsroman* and fairy-tale shape, creates a story of disability as abnormal, restricting, and in need of compensation if not cure. Dolor's godmother and her magical gifts function prosthetically to reinforce the deviance of Dolor's body and the need to remove that deviance. However, the narration, focalization, and illustration complicate the concept of disability as different, implying at times universal corporeal limitedness and wholly pervasive physical difference. But these dialogically opposed ideas of disability are able to exist in the narrative without needing to be resolved. Critics Charles Frey and John Griffith have similarly noted the 'dual impulses' in *The Little Lane Prince*, including 'escape from and acceptance of worldly responsibilities,' 'action and rest, company and solitude, independence and dependence,' although they only briefly touch upon the duality with which it depicts disability (93–94). They argue that '*The Little Lane Prince* requires us to come at some point to the nub of its contradictions' about which 'no firm consensus will ever by [*sic*] reached ... [, n]or need a consensus be reached' (93, 98). On this point, I completely agree. Just like the concepts of disability

that collide in the narrative form and structure of the novels discussed in previous chapters, those colliding in *The Little Lane Prince* are not meant to be resolved one way or the other; rather, they exhibit the complicated and ever-shifting role of the body in Victorian thought. While the following chapter's *fin-de-siècle* mysteries use scientific, medical, and legal rhetoric rather than fairy-tale discourse to investigate the disabled subject, like *The Little Lane Prince*, they convey irresolvable, conflicting ideas about the deviant body.